

OFFICE OF THE _____

Ontario Good Roads Ass'n

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DECEMBER, 1895.

County Roads . . .

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Ontario Good Roads Association held in the City of Guelph, on Wednesday, the 11th day of December, 1895, the following resolution was passed:—

Moved by J. F. Beam, seconded by Allan Macdougall,

1st.—“That we recommend the County Roads System as best adapted to advance road improvement in the Province of Ontario.”

2nd.—“That County Roads should form a System connecting all Local Municipalities in a County.”

3rd.—“That the basis of assuming County Road Mileage in Local Municipalities should be that of equalized value.”

4th.—“That County Roads when assumed should be maintained by general County Rate.”

This is the first recommendation adopted by the Association and in presenting it for consideration the attention of Municipal Officers and the public generally is directed to the following information relating to some of the County Roads in the Province of Ontario and Systems recently adopted in the United States :

COUNTY ROADS IN ONTARIO.

In addition to statute labor and local expenditure some County Councils have assumed and maintain leading roads. In other counties grants are made each year to assist local municipalities in road improvement and in that way equalize the road expenditure.

One-third of the counties do not expend money for road improvements, one-third maintain county boundary lines, and in the remainder annual grants are made for the maintenance of roads, in the county, or the council has assumed and maintains certain leading roads.

PERTH.

In Perth the Huron gravel road is in charge of the county inspector. The maintenance of this road is paid in the first place out of the county funds and charged to the adjoining municipalities. This is paid with the county rate, not as a part of the rate, but paid at the same time.

WELLINGTON.

The county of Wellington maintains 143 miles of gravel road and expends \$50 per mile per annum for maintenance.

HASTINGS.

The County Council of Hastings has control of and maintains nearly 400 miles of county roads—some of these were first constructed as toll-roads and afterwards purchased by the county.

The annual expenditure in this county for road maintenance and construction is from \$12,000 to \$15,000 per annum. The work is done systematically. A superintendent of gravel roads is appointed at a salary of \$700, he paying his own expenses. A gravel road committee is appointed by the County Council. Two or more gangs of men are engaged, the foremen of each getting extra wages, the work is put directly in charge of the superintendent who reports monthly to the committee all details as to men, wages, work, etc. The strong points of this system of maintenance are :

1st.—The whole work through the committee is directly under the control of the council.

2nd.—The work is well done as there is no inducement to scamp it.

3rd.—It is done where most required at the best time.

4th.—The ratepayers are in touch with those performing the work and for any man to shirk his work will soon reach the superintendent.

5th.—By employment of good men continually at the work they become experts and capable of doing more than inexperienced hands.

The cost per mile of maintenance is about \$40 annually.

The basis of assuming county roads in Hastings is that of equalized value, care always being taken in assuming a road that it connects with the system in the adjoining municipality. The cost of maintenance of the roads is levied as a general rate to apply on any part of the system as found to be required.

THE HASTINGS SYSTEM INVESTIGATED.

The county council of Peterboro' at its June session appointed a special committee to investigate into the system of construction and maintenance of the public roads in the county of Hastings. This committee made a tour of the county, and have prepared a lengthy report giving particulars received from the ratepayers and officials interviewed, all of whom were unanimous in recommending a system of county roads. The concluding sections of the report read :—"We travelled through the townships of Marmora, Madoc, Hungerford, Thurlow, Sidney, Stirling and Rawdon, a distance of about ninety miles, through sections of country as varied as it is possible to find in our own county. We made diligent inquiry from public officials and private individuals, and there were no exceptions or differences of opinion in respect to the expenditure of the money that has been expended on the roads, and in view of this and what we have seen for ourselves we have agreed to the following presentment :

" Having viewed the roads, we are thoroughly convinced that the system of construction and maintenance of roads as adopted by the county of Hastings is good, and meets with our approval, and we would recommend, if thought advisable, that this system be adopted by the County of Peterborough.

SUMMARY OF STATE LAWS.

In the United States we have examples of different authorities controlling the construction and maintenance of highways.

In California, where the township system is optional, the County Council constructs and maintains all roads.

In Indiana the roads are maintained by the Townships ; but the County Council may assume control of particular roads when so authorized by vote of electors of municipality interested—the local municipalities paying all expenses.

In Massachusetts we find a combined system of county and state roads.

In New Hampshire the Township Councils control and maintain all roads.

In New Jersey, where it is said the greatest advance has been made in road making, we find the Townships in charge of the roads, while the County Council may select certain roads for improvements, at the joint expense of the State, County and Township.

In New York the County and Township authorities maintain the roads, each providing for the expense of the roads under their control. Statute labor is abolished in all local municipalities when a road is assumed by the County.

In Wisconsin all roads are controlled by the Township authorities. Statute labor is abolished, although it may be performed any year if a majority of the electors by vote so decide.

In all states the tendency is to abolish statute labor and divide the roads between County and Township authorities.

THE ONTARIO LAW.

The Municipal Act, Section 532, authorizes County Councils to assume roads with the consent of the Council of the local municipality in which the road is situated and Section 533 authorizes the maintenance of Township or County boundary lines. Section 534 provides—That when a County Council assumes by by-law any road within a Township as a County road, they shall, with as little delay as reasonably may be, cause the road to be planked, gravelled or macadamized.

In a County System, roads maintained by paid labor come in immediate comparison with those maintained by Statute Labor. Where the basis of assuming County Road mileage is that of equalized value, all Municipalities benefit alike, and contribute their proper proportion of the expense. The roads are under the constant supervision of a County Commissioner who brings to bear his experience in securing uniformity of road construction and efficient maintenance throughout.

Statute Labor . . .

In Ontario we find Townships in which statute labor is performed and others where commutation is compulsory at from 35 cents per day upwards, and in some sections the system has been entirely abolished.

In about fifty per cent. of the Townships statute labor is performed and may be commuted at the rate of \$1 per day; forty per cent. have reduced the rate to 75 cents per day, and in others the rate varies, being in some instances as low as 35 cents per day.

A number of the Townships have adopted a system whereby statute labor may be commuted before a date fixed by by-law at a lower rate than afterwards. This is done to encourage the payment of commutation money to pathmasters before statute labor begins. In other Townships the rate is reduced if commutation money is paid to the pathmasters at any time before he makes his returns to the clerk.

In the Township of Sarawak the statute labor of two wards is commuted at 70 cents per day, the benefits are so apparent in the extra amount of work performed, and the style and manner of road construction that the difference between commutation statute labor and the old system will not bear any comparison whatever. The conclusion there is that the old system of statute labor has served its usefulness, and that better results could be obtained at a commutation of 25 cents per day.

In the Township of South Grimsby, the commutation system has been in force in the unincorporated Village of Smithville for some time. The authorities recommend the commutation of all statute labor, especially in unincorporated villages.

In the Township of Niagara one-half the statute labor is commuted at 50 cents per day.

In the Township of Barton statute labor has been abolished and the rate of commutation varies from 35 cents to 50 cents per day according to outlay.

In the Township of Malden statute labor has been entirely abolished. Commutation was first adopted, pathmasters were done away with and commutation money raised in each of the four wards of the Township and expended by the Council. Under this system 50 cents a day went further than one day statute labor. The next step was to do away with commutation, and at present all road repairs are paid for out of the general rate.

The Ontario Good Roads Association trusts that the issuing of the foregoing information in the form of a bulletin will be of value to Municipal Councils and ratepayers throughout the country with whom road improvement is a feature of vital interest.